Viet Fugitive Criticizes CIA, Cites Offer on Political Party

By KEYES BEECH
Chicago Daily News Service

SAIGON — A South Vietnamese legislator accused of pro-Communist sympathies said today the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency offered him money to finance a political party but the deal fell through because the CIA wanted him to support President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Tran Ngoc Chau, 46-year-old national assemblyman, said two CIA men approached him more than a year ago and told him they would supply the funds if he would launch his own party.

Chau, who formerly had close ties with the CIA, said he considered the proposal but failed to reach agreement because of his stand that the Saigon government should open negotiations with the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the Viet Cong.

Officially at least, Thieu is bitterly opposed to negotiations with the NLF. He has accused Chau of being a "tool of communism" because the latter did not denounce his brother, a convicted Communist spy. Chau and Thieu were once close friends and as newly married young officers shared a house.

Chau declined to name the two CIA men who came to see him "because they were my friends and I don't want to hurt anybody."

But Chau is disenchanted with the Americans, especially the CIA, because, he says, they have refused to intervene in his behalf to clear him of Thieu's charges that he is a Communist. Chau swears he told CIA friends about his meetings with his brother in the mid-1960s. U.S. intelligence sources denied this.

"If this is a sample of the way the Americans treat their Vietnamese friends," Chau said, "I wonder about the future of thousands of other Vietnamese who have co-operated with the Americnas."

Chau, who has been on the run for several weeks out of fear of arrest or assassination, was interviewed in a secret hideout outside Saigon.

No formal charges have been brought against Chau. However, he has been under heavy pressure since Thieu's forces sought a three-fourths vote in the assembly to strip him and two other legislators of their parliamentary immunity so they can be tried for alleged Communist leanings.

Chau is a former province chief and once was in charge of all revolutionary development cadres in South Vietnam. The revolutionary development program was backed by CIA.

After first adopting a "hands off" attitude, Ambassador Ellsworth C. Bunker reportedly asked Thieu to soften his campaign against Chau because it was hurting the president's political image in the United States.

WASHINGTON POST DATE 2 Feb 70 PAGE 7

Senate Study Questions Optimism on Viet War

Risks in U.S. Policy Are Found

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

Official optimism in Washington and Saigon on the outlook for U.S. disengagement from the Vietnam war is seriously questioned in a Senate staff study.

The report, released yesterday, said American success in total withdrawal from the conflict rests on a fragile base that might topple with "agonizing" consequences.

Two staff consultants for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wrote the report after a Dec. 7-18 trip to South Vietnam and the Paris peace talks. They are James G. Lowenstein and Richard M. Moose, both former U.S. Foreign Service officers. Moose, until September, was at the White House as staff secretary for the National Security Council.

They produced a 40-page classified report for the committee and an 18-page public report. In the latter, they concluded in part that:

"The assumptions regarding the present situation in Vietnam and the expected course of developments in that country on which U.S. policy is apparently based, seem to rest on far more ambiguous, confusing, and contradictory evidence than pronouncements from Washington and Saigon indicate."

The NSC staff, directed by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, currently is making its own on-site study of the state of the war. Its objective, with greater resources, is similar: to check the validity of progress claims in the "Vietnamization" of the war. The official assessment is "cautious optimism."

There is general agreement, Lowenstein and Moose reported, as official accounts show, that there has been progress in the conduct of the war and in the pacification and Vietnamization programs, which they cited. What they questioned is how firm a base it provides to assure success.

American policy, they said, appears inextricably linked to replacement of U.S. troops by South Vietnamese troops, or Vietnamization; "the stability and cohesiveness" of the government headed by President Nguyen Van Thieu, and "the expectation that the enemy can and will do nothing to inhibit Vietnamization or disrupt the Thieu government's stability."

All three links must succeed, they said, if "present U.S. objectives in Vietnam are to be realized." But the prospects for success of any one of these three factors, "much less all three, must be regarded as, at best, uncertain," they said.

U.S. policy, they noted, is based on the assumption that the enemy cannot, or will not, prevent phased withdrawal of American combat forces. They cautioned, as other observers have, that:

"Were the North Vietnamese to launch a massive attack at any point in this withdrawal, the United States would be faced with the agonizing prospect of either halting—or even reversing—the process of withdrawal, on the one hand, or being forced, on the other hand, to effect an accelerated, complete withdrawal which would be interpreted at home, and probably abroad, as a military and political defeat."

Some U.S. officials privately concede this to be their greatest risk factor.

President Nixon indirectly reflected that concern Friday night when he reiterated his warning against enemy escalation of the war. He said the Vietnamization "policy" is "irreversible," but the timing of withdrawals is variable.

"When Vietnamese military self-sufficiency is discussed by American officers," said the Lowenstein-Moose report, "it is never put in a context of less than two to four years."

In South Vietnam, they said, "there does not seem to be a fixed timetable" for Vietnamization, "and the costs involved in training and in turning over equipment to the Vietnamese are never mentioned." Construction work on American bases throughout the country appears to be continuing, for example, although it is explained that such work is not new construction but "upgrading and hardening existing facilities."

The report said one high South Vietnamese official expressed confidence that the United States would not pull out "more than 100,000 troops a year in the next few years . . . and that, in any event, he did not expect the United States to pull out more than half its troops."

"In fact," said the consultants, "the talk in Saigon, among Vietnamese as well as Americans, is in terms of keeping some 250,000 troops there for years."

The Senate staff members encountered the familiar Saigon syndrome: "No conclusion seems to stand up from one conversation or experience to the next." Also, "whether inadvertently or deliberately, (official) briefings do not objectively present the pros and cons but rather emphasize progress and accomplishment."

Among other statistics, the report presents one little known to Americans about the "Phoenix program," which employs counter-terrorism against Vietcong cadre. The measurement of success is expressed in the polite term, "neutralized." It is applied to "a coordinated intelligence and operational effort designed to route out Vietcong by killing them, capturing them, or converting them to the government side."

"Of the 15,000 VCI (Vietcong infrastructure) neutralized in 1968, some 15 per cent were killed, 72 per cent captured, and 13 per cent defected. Of the VCI neutralized last year through October, the percentage killed was almost double that in 1968."

The report said "the most frequently heard criticism of President Thieu" is "that he is becoming more 'Diemist,' which, it is explained, means increasingly autocratic, secretive, and isolated."

"While many ('Americans and Vietnamese') believe that Thieu has the support of no more than 20 per cent of the population (Communist support is put at about 15 per cent), it is felt that as long as he can count on American support and use the government machinery at his disposal he will not attempt to involve other non-Communist political elements in governing the country."

NEW YORK TIMES DATE 28 Jan 70 PAGE 1

U.S. Said to Have Hired Foes Of Sihanouk for Missions in '67

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27 — The United States used a Cambodian sect dedicated to the overthrow of the legitimate government of Cambodia on covert missions into that country in 1967, according to testimony at the trial of a Green Beret captain convicted in 1968 of killing one of the members of the sect.

The Cambodians, members of the Kemer Serai, were used mainly as interpreters and guides for intelligence and operational groups operating against Communist forces in Cambodia, according to Pentagon sources acquainted with the operation.

And the Cambodians, it was said, were paid for these services by the Special Forces and American intelligence groups, although they were known to be considered subversive in their own country.

Sworn testimony by witnesses and the defendant, Capt. John J. McCarthy Jr., in the 1968 trial discloses that detachment B57, Fifth Special Forces Group, used members of the Kemer Serai during a project outside South Vietnam called Operation Cherry, and then got them employment with an unidentified American intelligence agency.

Lawyers for Captain McCarthy filed motions with the Military Court of Review today, charging that the Army had deliberately ordered one prospective witness not to show up at the murder trial in Longbinh in South Vietnam, and had failed to compel the appearance of two others.

They also charged that the prosecution had hidden a laboratory report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation from the defense for two years and then had negligently lost the piece of evidence referred to in the report when the defense learned of its existence.

The defense lawyers maintain, as did the military counsel at the time of the trial, that the Kemer Serai wanted to kill the member of their sect whom the captain was convicted of shooting because he was believed to be a Soviet spy working for the Cambodian Government.

Sources in the State Department said tonight that the United States never had anything to do with the Kemer Serai, or Khmer Serai, except to hire Cambodians living in South Vietnam who were members of the group.

Loss of Support Reported

The sources identified the Kemer Serai as a dissident group that had long opposed Premier Norodom Sihanouk. They said the group had been based in Vietnam or Thailand since the late nineteen-fifties and had lost its support within Cambodia by the mid-nineteen-sixties. The sources also said that the sect has since ceased to be effective, that it had disintegrated, and that the several hundred former members in Cambodia had pledged allegiance to the Government in Pnom Penh.

However, the transcript of the trial specifically referred to operations outside of South Vietnam as revealed in this conversation between the law officer at the court-martial and Maj. Patrick J. McKernan, chief of the counterintelligence operations branch at Army headquarters in South Vietnam:

The law officer asked several questions about Special Forces operations outside normal Army activities, which led the major to say that the activities related to the trial involved a country "which we are not dealing with in this war."

"This is a [censored] other than Vietnam or the United States?" he was asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Major McKernan.

The law officer, who serves as the judge at a court-martial, tried to get more information on what actions were involved.

"A contingency plan?" he asked.

One [illegible] the major replied, "that this individual was recruited for."

"The victim?"

"The victim," said the counterintelligence chief, who added that the operational plan was named Operation Cherry.

After the court-martial formally opened, witness after witness quoted in the transcript described this Operation Cherry and the Kemer Serai.

Captain McCarthy was asked about the victim when he took the stand in his own defense.

"The man was an ethnic Cambodian, spoke several languages—Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and English, quite well," he said. "He was, he held a rank in the organization known as Kemer Serai."

16 Reported 'on Team'

"What was the Kemer Serai?" asked the defense counsel.

"The Kemer Serai in effect is an organization which plans the political overthrow of the Cambodian Government in the future," he replied.

Captain McCarthy was commanding officer of Operation Cheery as the project was being completed by Detachment B57. In his testimony he stated that five American soldiers and "11 ethnic Cambodians," as opposed to Cambodians born outside their native country, were on "the team."

He testified that Inchin Hia Lam, or Jimmy, as the victim was known, was a member of that team along with other members of the Kemer Serai.

Associated Press

Capt. John J. McCarthy

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
27 JAN 1970

Intelligence gathering only

CIA curbs its Viet arms-and-aid role

By Daniel Southerland
Special correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Saigon

The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been gradually cutting back its involvement in a number of paramilitary and pacification operations in Vietnam. The agency is concentrating more and more of its efforts here on its traditional role of intelligence gathering.

The U.S. Embassy, the U.S. military command, and the agency itself appear to agree that the shift is in the right direction and will permit the CIA to do a more effective job in the intelligence field.

In the early stages of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the CIA was used to carry out a number of tasks which required great flexibility and a capacity for swift funding and action which neither the State Department nor the Defense Department appeared to possess.

It is no secret that the CIA controlled the operations of U.S. Special Forces troops working with montagnards watching the infiltration routes in the central highlands of South Vietnam in the early 1960's, funded and helped train the Vietnamese Special Forces in their early years, and later did the same for the black-pajamaclad Vietnamese Rural Development (RD) cadre, who now are more than 40,000 strong in the countryside.

Phaseout gradual

Several years ago, the agency started giving up whatever control it had over the Special Forces. Last year, it got out of the training program for RD cadre at Vung Tau and stopped being their paymaster in the provinces.

More recently, the CIA has started cutting back its involvement in other programs which it helped develop in Vietnam.

Among them is the Phoenix program, a two-year-old, nationwide effort which pools information from half a dozen U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence agencies with the object of identifying and capturing Viet Cong political agents.

According to American advisers, the program is not doing so well as it should be for a variety of reasons, including a lack of leadership and interest on the part of the Vietnamese.

Phoenix operations, which range from a single policeman going after a single agent to hundreds of troops surrounding whole villages, are aimed at destroying the Viet Cong infrastructure, or "phantom government."

The chief American adviser in the program remains a CIA man, but the CIA has in most places withdrawn its men from the role of coordinators on the U.S. side of the effort in the 44 provinces. It has turned over the financing of Phoenix operations to the U.S. Army.

The CIA has also been yielding its control over the provincial reconnaissance units (PRUs), one of the main arms of the Phoenix program. The PRUs specialize in night raids into enemy territory aimed at capturing Viet Cong agents. Under the CIA, they have been paid better than most regular troops.

Demands exceeded capacity

The CIA still advises agencies involved in the Phoenix program, but its involvement has noticeably diminished and is more indirect.

Informed sources say the CIA will also give up control over its "census grievance" network in the villages and hamlets, which provides a flow of information to the province level that circumvents the Vietnamese chain of command.

"When we came into Vietnam in a big way, there were a number of revolutionary concepts involved in fighting this kind of war which our conventional government and army machinery were unable to handle," said a well-informed source.

"When the PRUs were set up for instance, there was a need for mobile reconnaissance units not subject to all the pressures of the Vietnamese apparatus," he said. "The U.S. Army was not in a position to issue them weapons. The agency was more flexible.

"But the larger these programs became, the more they came under people's control, and the more the Vietnamese became capable of running them," the source said.

"As these programs became less novel and more routine, the CIA became less suitable to run them."

'Bad experience' charged

After the CIA had gotten such programs moving, the U.S. mission and the U.S. military command wanted more control over them, the source said. It appears the CIA was more than happy to relinquish command.

"This has been a bad experience for them," the source said. "In some cases, their reputation has suffered. The CIA likes being independent, but here they've been involved in funding, supporting, and run-

continued

ning programs whose policies they couldn't completely control.

"With programs reaching into each province, they were forced to recruit people from outside the agency to do some of the jobs for them, and this diluted the professionalism of their own people. Many of the outsiders were a lot less dedicated to their jobs than the professional CIA men. And a lot of the professional people resented being taken away from their traditional intelligence-gathering role to do other jobs.

"The agency has gone through a large personnel and budget cutback," he said. "It would prefer to preserve most of its resources for its classical intelligence role."

Data reputation solid

Despite its dispersal of talent and resources, the CIA has enjoyed the reputation here of frequently providing Washington with more-realistic reports on political, military, and economic developments than do the political section of the U.S. embassy, the U.S. military command, and the U.S. aid mission. In some cases where other agencies appeared to have been unduly optimistic, CIA analysts came up with cautious and pessimistic assessment which later proved more accurate.

There were times several years ago when the CIA appeared on some levels to be working at cross purposes with the U.S. ambassador and the U.S. military command. Today, however, these relationships appear for the most part to work rather smoothly.

Although there seems to be general agreement on the wisdom of the shift in CIA activities, not everyone is happy with the cutback.

A U.S. Army officer complained to a reporter that it was going to be harder to get good and fast material support in the Phoenix program now that the Army is in charge of the logistical side of Phoenix operations.

Flexibility praised

And a civilian pacification official—he is not a CIA man—said:

"It is unfortunate that the CIA is the only organization in Vietnam with the flexibility and imagination needed to sustain special operations where we have had to bring a lot of people in quickly. The only reason they got involved was that they were the only ones with the flexibility to respond."

The CIA does continue to offer advice to the Vietnamese police, and the police agencies are the backbone of the Phoenix program.

Although Saigon government officials have denied it, there is good reason to believe the CIA last year helped the police uncover an espionage ring that reached all the way into the Presidential Palace. The subsequent trial in November resulted in the conviction of 41 persons, including a former special assistant to President Thieu.

Vietnam

NEW YORK TIMES DATE 1970 PAGE 1

'69 INFILTRATION TO SOUTH VIETNAM IS PUT AT 100,000

Allied Estimates Say Year's Flow From North Was Drop of 30,000 to 40,000

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 6—Infiltration by North Vietnamese into South Vietnam in 1969 totaled 100,000 to 110,000 men or 30,000 to 40,000 fewer than in 1968, according to estimates my allied officials here.

As in 1968, they said, infiltration rose at year end from a seasonal low point, but the monthly figures for November and December, 1969, were still reported below the 3,500 and 4,503 figures for November and December, 1968.

At the end of 1969, according to official estimates, there were 230,000 to 240,000 enemy soldiers and Communist political functionaries in South Vietnam, or ready to enter. This figure represents a drop from the 290,000 estimated at the end of 1968.

40% Combat Troops

About 130,000 of these were described as Vietcong fighters, the remainder as North Vietnamese infiltrators. Of the total military forces, 40 per cent, or less than 90,000, were believed to be combat troops. The rest would be support forces. About half of the total enemy forces, approximately 120,000 were believed to be actually in South Vietnam, the rest poised just outside.

The allied forces consist of 474,400 United States troops and 68,900 soldiers of other nations supporting a million-man South Vietnamese Army and Militia.

Authorities here said the significance of the enemy figures as a wey to Communist intentions was difficult to assess. They noted that, while the number of enemy troops entering the South might be down, many thousands were in the "pipeline" on their way from the North—or placed in Cambodia or Laos for entry into the South at anytime.

The uncertainty on how to evaluate the infiltration figures appears to reach to the highest levels in Washington.

Rise Noted by Nixon

President Nixon and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird reported recently that infiltration was up, comparing November with the three month before.Secretary of State William P. Rogers said Dec. 23 it was down 60 per cent, comparing it with the year-end figures of 1968.

Because infiltration is a major factor in President Nixon's decisions on troop withdrawal and because American officials say they do not want to show the Communist how much—or little—they know of enemy movements, officials here declined to discuss infiltration except on a background basis and without attribution.

The North Vietnamese have never directly admitted sending soldiers to fight in the South. The picture of infiltration is worked out from interrogations of prisoners and defectors, aerial reconnaissance, ground observation by electronic sensors and human spotters hidden in the jungle, and spies.

The analysis is made more difficult because not all the soldiers who leave the North go directly to South Vietnam. Some get sick, a number desert and others are stationed in Cambodia and Laos pending eventual infiltration or other orders.

Wrong Conclusion Drawn

Because of United States reports that North Vietnam at various times this year was dispatching up to 1,000 soldiers a day to the South, some analysts concluded that 30,000 North Vietnamese were entering the South monthly. Actually, that number was never estimated at more than 20,000 a month—early last year—and it was put at 4,000 last month, officials said.

The first indication of the effectiveness of recent infiltration is likely to come around the Lunar New Year Feb. 6 or some time thereafter when officials expect some kind of offensivesimilar to those in the last two years.

A picture of the infiltration process was provided in an interview last week by a former infiltrator, who now works for the Government in Saigon.

The former infiltrator, Le Van Huong of Haky village in North Vietnam's Haidung Province, recalled he had joined the army in 1964, when he was 24 years old. In August, 1968, he said, he was ordered "to liberate the South and defeat the American aggressor."

He gave the following account:

He was assigned to a 600-man battalion with a code name that translates as Punch 217. In his back pack he carried 60 ponds of supplies, including a spare uniform, two pairs of jungle boots, mosquito netting, a hammock, rice, seasoning powder, a few toilet articles, two canteens of water, a dagger, a flashlight and 300 rounds of ammunition for his Chinese-made AK-47 automatic rifle.

Walk for Six Days

Marching four days and resting one, the battalion took a month and a half to reach the southern edge of North Vietnam and cross into Laos. For the next four and a half months the soldiers walked south through Laos, moving six days and resting and resupplying themselves at caches on the seventh.

Against orders, some of the soldiers traded their spare uniforms to Laotians for food. It was forbidden because the Laotians were known to sell the uniforms to South Vietnamese troops who would wear them to infiltrate North Vietnamese positions.

Four nights on the trail the troops were shown movies, including "The Guerrilla of the Railroad," about a Chinese Communist victory over Chiang Kai-shek's forces, and a film about the Vietminh victory over the French at Dienbienphu in 1954.

The infiltrators had one narrow escape. Their commander held up the troops at one point, shortly before B-52's bombers pounded the trail the soldiers would have been walking.

Drop of 30% in Total

By the time they reached a point in Cambodia from their South Vietnamese destination Tayninh, code-named K-9, their number had dropped 30 per cent through sickness and defections. They were given four days' leave for the rest and recuperation and at the end of that time, 40 per cent of the battalion never returned.

The remaining troops had the mission of reinforcing Vietcong units in Tayninh but, Mr. Huong recalled, when they arrived they found no Vietcong troops, only Vietcong commanders. The Vietcong forces were so depleted that the North Vietnamese ended up as the sole troops. Several months later, Private Huong deserted.

Other former infiltrators and Vietcong soldiers interviewed in Saigon reported that they and some of their comrades wanted to desert long before they had done so but were afraid of informers planted among them. Deserters who are caught, they said, were usually not killed but carefully reindoctrinated on the cause of the revolution in special camps.

A former North Vietnamese sergeant major who infiltrated into the South and later deserted reported that his friend, the company commander, had been given 50,000 counterfeit South Vietnamese piasters, freshly printed in the North and worth something less than $500, to buy supplies from peasants for his men in the South.

The defectors still spoke with some pride of the hardships on the trail. One reported climbing a 250-yard rock face on makeshift ladders tied together. Others told of nearly starving and dodging United States bombing strikes in hastily sought shelters.

United States analysts said that their improvision and cunning was often ingenious. In the North some infiltrators used to set up blinking red and white lights so that United States pilots would think it was a convoy and bomb the empty trail while the real convoy rolled by safely somewhere else.

Bambo Sustains Trucks

The larger trails are often paved with bamboo matting wide and strong enough for small trucks. American counter-guerrilla teams that have been on the trails say they are comparable, in their way, to the United States highway system, with road signs and rest stops with buried supplies.

The enemy soldiers who use the trails are not told of their position, it is said, or even the name of their unit. One defector reported that a soldier was put on report for asking an officer, "Isn't that Trung Sung Mountain?"

While the infiltration goes on, a reverse process is also reported taking place. Soldiers heading south pass wounded comrades, sometimes escorted by a nurse, on their way back for treatment. Young children of Vietcong officers are also reported using the trails for the trip north for education and indoctrination.